

Statesville's second-half blitz sinks Raiders

By Bruce Martin

Gazette Sports Reporter

STATESVILLE - South Point football coach Jim Biggerstaff had the perfect summation after watching his Red Raiders lose to Statesville, 27-7, in the first round of the state 3-A football playoffs Friday night.

"It isn't what we expected, it's not what we wanted, but it's what we got," Biggerstaff said.

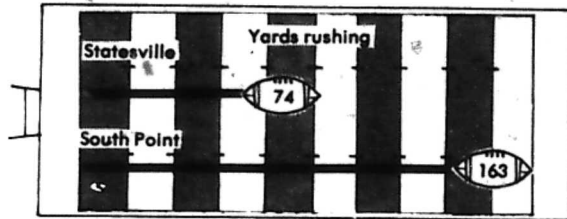
Statesville came out with fire in its eyes in the second half and was able to outmuscle South Point to give the Red Raiders their first loss of the season.

Statesville takes a 10-1 record into the second round against West Henderson while South Point ends its season at 10-1.

"Ten and one is not bad but it's not as good as 11-0," Biggerstaff said. "They were a strong team.

"The better team won tonight."

Measuring up

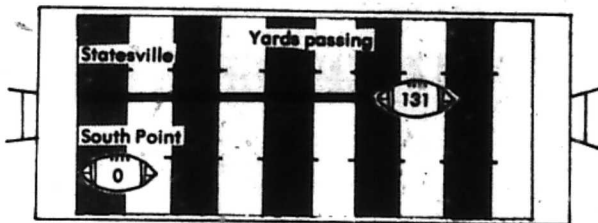


Statesville took the momentum with an 85-yard touchdown drive to start the second half. That drive tied the game at 7-7 and Statesville kept the momentum the rest of the way.

Perhaps the biggest play came when South Point quarterback Mark Young fumbled the football

on the Red Raiders' 9-yard line. The ball was recovered by Mitch Rivers, giving Statesville a golden scoring opportunity.

The Greyhounds took advantage and took the lead when Brian Stevenson ran in from the 1 with 9:50 left in the game. Scott McLelland's extra point kick was



good and the Greyhounds led 14-7.

"The two big plays was that fumble in the second half and a dropped pass by us on fourth down," Biggerstaff said. "They had momentum in the second half. They were strong and hungry and kept coming after us."

Statesville was relentless in its

pursuit of the end zone and took a 21-7 lead when quarterback Walter Walker completed a 74-yard touchdown pass to Sheldon Cuthrell with 5:47 left in the game.

The Greyhounds closed the scoring when Walker passed to Wade Rhinehardt for a 5-yard touchdown pass with 3:15 left in

the season for South Point.

"Our kids were sluggish and didn't play inspired football tonight," Biggerstaff said.

Tonja Watson gained 87 yards rushing for South Point and was still effective even after Statesville had shut down Young.

It was almost as if two different games were played as the first half looked like the game was going to turn into the Turnover Bowl. South Point lost the ball twice and Statesville three times, many on bizarre fumbles.

Statesville recovered a fumble in the second quarter when a punt hit Watson's foot and Daye recovered the football for the Greyhounds.

After the offense sputtered for most of the first half, the Red Raiders were finally able to get

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the ball into the end zone when Chris Wooten scored on a 1-yard run with 48 seconds left until halftime. Mike Dudko's extra point gave South Point a 7-0 lead.

Statesville looked like a different team when it came out for the second half and put together the impressive 15-play, 83-yard drive for the score that tied the game and turned things around.

Stevenson scored the touchdown on a 1-yard run with 4:57 left in the third quarter and McLelland's kick tied the score at 7-7.

The Greyhounds had the momentum and never let up on South Point.

"It was a completely different game in the second half," Biggerstaff said. "We squandered two chances to score in the first half and that came back to haunt us."

"I had a good feeling at halftime. I felt great because we were up 7-0. But we couldn't hold them in the second half."

"The dressing room is full of tears. This is not what we expected."

South Point 7 Statesville 27

South Point	0	7	0	0	—	7
Statesville	0	0	7	20	—	27

SP — Wooten 1 run (Ducko kick)

S — B. Stevenson 1 run (McLelland kick)

S — B. Stevenson 4 run (McLelland kick)

S — Cuthrell 74 pass from Walker (McLelland kick)

S — Rhinehardt 5 pass from Walker (kick failed)